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TRANSACTIONS
OF THE
KILKENNY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,
FOR THE YEAR 1852.

ANCIENT TAPESTRY OF KILKENNY CASTLE.

BY THE REV. JAMES GRAVES.

AMONGST the minor paths of history, few lead to more inviting fields of research than those which introduce us to the *vie privée* of the people who lived in by-gone ages. When we can form to ourselves clear notions of how they dressed, and what they eat, of the mansions they lived in, and the furniture which formed the necessaries or luxuries of high and low, history ceases to present us with mere abstractions of man and woman, we feel that we *know* the actors on the then stage of life, and take a proportionate interest in their doings and ultimate fates. It may by some be thought beneath the dignity of the Historic Muse to stoop to such apparent trifles—though I am far from being persuaded of the cogency of the arguments used in support of what is called the philosophic school of history: none, however, can deny that the legitimate province of such a Society as ours, embraces everything which can throw light on the past, or aid the historian in dashing off a true and vigorous picture of the age he may have selected as the subject of his pen.

It is very much to be feared that *comfort*, in the modern acceptation of the term, had no place in the vocabulary of the people who lived in what are called “the good old times.” Carpetted floors, and papered walls, air-tight window-sashes, and close-fitting doors they knew and recked not of. The chamber of the prince and the hut of the peasant were alike strewn with rushes; but, whilst the latter was obliged to brook the mud-built walls of his cabin, the former hid the rugged masonry of his castle hall with temporary hangings, which were, in general, carried from place to place in his train; the expensive nature of the material preventing those—except,

perhaps, Royalty itself—who boasted of more than one house, from providing each residence with furniture of this nature. A letter, which will be quoted in the course of this short memoir, proves that in the families of the first nobles of the realm this custom prevailed even so late as the termination of the 17th century ; whilst many an old mansion exhibits, even at the present day, the storied tapestry which had adorned the more ancient residences of the family, in times long gone by. Many persons can well remember the “Tapestry Chamber” which existed in the Castle of Kilkenny, previously to the late remodelling of that building. Some of the present generation, however, have never seen the hangings of this room, which were taken down about twenty-eight years ago on the dismantling of the old edifice, and since that period have not been accessible to the public. The entire suit consists of six pieces, thirteen feet deep, and varying from fourteen to twenty-two feet in length. The “action” of the pictorial drama is, in some instances, rather obscure ; but it is evident that it was meant to represent what the ancient Inventories still extant in the Ormonde Evidence Chamber, term “the story of Decius.” The sequence of the pieces is probably as follows :—

It will be recollect that P. Decius Mus, and T. Manlius Torquatus were consuls in the year before Christ 340, when the great Latin war called forth all the energies of the Roman Republic. The consuls, who conjointly led the Roman army against the Latins, are represented in the first of the large pieces as receiving from the pontifex maximus, or high priest, a statue of Mars holding in his hand a winged Victory, prophetic and emblematic of the event of the war. In the meantime it was revealed to Decius, in a night vision, that the army of one nation, and the general of the other, were devoted to the infernal deities, and to mother earth. He then held a conference with his brother consul, and it was agreed between them, that, if in the approaching battle either of them perceived his division wavering, he should devote himself to death for the safety of the army, and to secure victory to the side of the Romans : this forms the second subject. Decius, perceiving his wing yielding before the fierce onset of the Latin forces, immediately proceeded to devote himself, and, accordingly, in another piece he is represented as performing that ceremony before his brother consul ; a fourth department represents him in the custody of the lictors, apparently about to suffer the flagellation usual before the sacrificial act. Next comes the battle scene, an admirable composition, in which Decius is represented as combating single-handed against crowds of opponents. This composition is a most admirable example of bold fore-shortening and spirited action. One must admire the grey horse rearing under his slain rider, and the rigid muscles of the dead warrior stretched in the fore-ground. The devoted Latins (for Decius by his act devoted them along with himself) are represented in the back ground as routed and flying. A sixth piece of tapestry represents the funeral pile of the dead hero,

with the trophy, and chained Latin captives indicative of victory.¹ I do not hesitate to say that the entire series exhibits talent of the highest order, both in the original design, and subsequent execution by the difficult process of the loom; and I am persuaded that the artist who designed the subjects must have been eminent in his time. It is worthy of remark that the pillars which divide the compartments are similar to those which occur in Raphael's cartoon of the "Healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple," which it may be remembered was also intended to be worked in tapestry.

As it is desirable that whatever is known of the history of these fine examples of ancient art should be placed on record, I have briefly thrown together a few notes from unpublished sources, derived by the noble owner's permission from the Ormonde Manuscripts, and which I beg to submit to the members of the Society.

We are informed by Sir James Ware, in his "Annals of Ireland," and by Carte, in his Introduction to the "Life of James, Duke of Ormond," that Piers, earl of Ormonde, and his lady, Margaret Fitzgerald, established at Kilkenny the manufacture of tapestry, Turkey carpets, diapers, &c., for which purpose he introduced workmen from Flanders. The manuscript Inventories still remaining in Kilkenny Castle, show that Thomas, the tenth earl, Peter's successor, was possessed of many suits of tapestry hangings, and richly wrought carpets, which probably may have come from the Kilkenny looms. It is well known that on the death of earl Thomas, James I. unjustly aided his favourite, Preston, afterwards created viscount Dingwall and earl of Desmond—to whom he gave in marriage Elizabeth, only daughter, and heir-general of earl Thomas—in seizing the property of earl Walter, the heir-male, and decreed to the former Kilkenny Castle, and the greater part of the Ormonde property. There is preserved in the Evidence Chamber an Inventory of the goods of the earl of Desmond, which had originally, no doubt, been the property of earl Thomas. From this Inventory, dated 20th December, 1630, I have made the following extracts:—

In the Castle of Kilkenny, In my Lo: of Tullye's chamber, 5 peece of tapestry, praised at 6*l.* str. Sold to Mr. David Roth.

In the staire head chamber, 5 peeces of Tapestry praised 10*l.* 10*s.* Sold to Philipp Piercevall, Esquire, for 16*l.*

In the white tower chamber, 4 peeces of Tapestry praised at 8*l.* str. Sold to Mr. Henry Masterson for 8*l.*

In the chamber neere the gallery 18 peeces of Tapestry praised att 50*l.* Sold to the Earl of Corke for 103*l.*

In "A Note of such stuffe, as are to be bought for the earl of Ormond and Ossory" occurs "Item three pieces of Tapestry, suitable

¹ Many persons suppose that this suit of tapestry comprises the events of the two Latin Wars, and that what is supposed above to represent the scourging of the

self-devoted Decius, really represents the order for the execution of the disobedient but brave son of Torquatus. This conjecture is not improbable.

to the Tapestry in Carrick." This "note" has reference to the goods above alluded to as having belonged to the earl of Desmond.

We next meet with a notice of the following pieces of tapestry hangings as being in the marquis (afterward duke) of Ormonde's possession at Caen, after his withdrawal from Ireland; the date of the Inventory is May 12th, 1652.

Five peeces of Tapestrie, forest work.
Five peeces of the Tapestrie of Cyrus.
Five peeces of Ahasuerus.
Five peeces of Paul.

Five peeces of Tobias.
Five peeces more of Tobias.
Five peeces of Palamon.
Five peeces of Ilias.

These hangings appear to have been brought over to France, and afterwards to have come back to Ireland with the family when they returned at the Restoration, as we find them all specifically mentioned in an Inventory of the goods and furniture belonging to the duke, in his several houses in Ireland, dated 1684. And from another Inventory, of 1689, we are informed that the "five peeces of Paul" contained "y^e story of y^e sacrifice of y^e unknown gods." A suit of "Sampson" is also mentioned, whereof a good specimen still remains, namely, the closing scene of Sampson's life, the pulling down of the Philistine temple.

The earliest date at which I have met any notice of the magnificent suit of tapestry hangings, which forms the more immediate subject of this memoir, is in an "Inventory of the duke and dutchess of Ormonde's goods at Kilkenny, Dunmore, and Clonmell, the 25th of August, 1675," where it heads the following curious list, which I have been tempted to transcribe at length from the intrinsic interest which it possesses. I may observe that the suit still in existence answers exactly to the dimensions given, namely, thirteen feet deep; and of the identity of the design, "the story of Dietius"—Decius, who devoted himself to death for the good of his country in the Latin war—there can be no question. The other suit, which is described as "of several horses," is in another Inventory alluded to as exhibiting "men on horseback":—

SUITS OF HANGINGS.

1. One suite of Antwerp hangings, containing Seaven peeces of the Story of Dietius, thirteene foote deepe.
2. One suite of Brussels hangings, containing eight peeces of the story of Achilles, elleven foote deepe. Four peeces of these in my Ladye's drawing roome.
3. One suite of Antwerp hangings, containing eight peeces of the story of Octavius Cesar, eleaven foote deepe. Six peeces of these in the north chamber of the gallery.
4. One suite of Lambeth hangings, containing six peeces onely of severall horses, elleaven foote deepe.
5. One suite of fine Antwerp hangings, containing eight peeces, all Land Skipp, eleaven foote deepe. Four peeces of these in y^e south end chamber of the Gallery.
6. One suite of Antwerp hangings, containing seaven peeces of the story of Palipheme [Pholypheme], tenn foote deepe. Five pieces of these in my Lady Dutchesse's chamber.
7. One suite of Antwerp hangings, containing six peeces, florest work, tenn foote deepe. Four peeces of these in my Lady Arran's chamber.

8. One suit of Antwerp hangings, containing five peeces, the story of Aswerus and Hester, nine foote deepe. Four peeces of these in the roome over my Lord's closet in the Tower.

9. One suite of Antwerp hangings, containing five peeces of Land Skippe, tenne foote deepe.

10. One suite of Antwerp hangings, containing foure peeces of the story of Cyrus, eleaven foote deepe.

11. One suite of ould Brussels hangings, conteining five peeces of very small figure, eleven foote deepe.

12. One suite of Antwerp hangings, containing five peeces of the story of Diana and her Nymphs, nine foote deepe.

13. One suite of Ordinary Dutch hangings, conteining five peeces of Land Skipp worke, nine foote deepe, whereof one peece without silk.

14. Two peeces of Dutch Landskipp hangings, nine foote deepe. These in my Ld. Arran's Dressing Roome.

15. Seaven peeces of ould scoured imagery hangings, eleaven foote deepe. Six peeces of these in my Lord John's chamber.

16. Fower peeces of ould scoured imagery hangings, eleaven foote deepe, and one other peece of the same sort, tenne foote deepe. All these in Mr. Lowe's chamber.

17. Five peeces of ould scoured Landskipp hangings, nine foote deepe. All these for Clonmell Dineing Roome.

18. Five peeces of ould scoured imagery hangings, nine foote deepe. All these for the Drawing Roome at Clonmell.

19.a One ould peece of Imagery hangings, five ells, ten foote deepe.

19.b One suite of ordinary Dutch hangings, conteining five peeces, the story of the Cobler, eight foote deepe. These are in Mr. fferris' chamber.

20. Three Tapestry Sumpture Cloths.

21. One suite of New Tapestry hangings, eight foote deepe, conteining five peeces. The story of Don Quixott.

22. Three peeces of new Tapestry hangings, about eight foote deepe, made for my Lord Duke's new Dressing Roome.

Belonging to Dunmore.

23. Five fine peeces of English hangings, the story of Palidore, nine foote deepe. For ye Drawing Roome.

24. Three fine pieces of English hangings, Baiorells, nine foote deepe. For my Lady's chamber.

25. Three peeces of ffine Antwerpe hangings, Landskipp, small imagery, eight foote deepe. The upper alcove chamber.

No. 11 in this curious list, “the ould Brussels hangings, of *very small figure*,” is probably that mentioned in an “Inventory of the goods of Richard, earl of Desmond, and his wife Elizabeth, daughter and heir-general to Thomas, earl of Ormonde, in their mansion house of Donnington, Parish of Shaine, County Berks, March 6, 1628,” and valued very highly. “Item sixteene *peeces of little*, in hangings which were in pawne to Mr. William Pearse, w^{ch} Mr. Patrick Weemes redeemed from him for the some of 48*l.* 10*s.* 0*d.*”

The “peeces of Don Quixott,” no longer in existence, exhibit, I believe, an early instance of the popularity of Cervantes’ immortal work in England: the Dutch series of “the story of the Cobler” would no doubt be curious did we possess it; of most of the remainder are extant several fragments in a very decayed state, but still curious. I have been informed by the last occupant of Carrick Castle, Mr. Wogan of Carrick, that when his tenancy ceased one of the rooms was hung with tapestry representing the story of Sampson, which he states was taken down and removed to Kilkenny.

The tapestry hangings containing the history of Decius were subsequently placed in the room still called “the Tapestry Chamber,” situate in the north-eastern tower of Kilkenny Castle, overhanging the river, where they remained till taken down in the year 1824, preparatory to the remodelling of the structure, and were stored away until removed from their concealment last autumn by the marquis of Ormonde. The six remaining pieces of “the story of Decius” have been repaired and re-lined, and bid fair to last for many years to come. Besides this series there are five other pieces in a state of preservation, more or less perfect, making, with one very much injured, twelve in all. The six last alluded to comprise some landscapes, into which many birds and beasts are introduced, Vulcan forging the arms of Achilles, with modern fire-irons, guns, pistols, and cannon lying about the god’s forge, and the scene from Sampson’s History already mentioned.

I shall conclude this hurried sketch, which might be considerably extended without exhausting the materials, by subjoining a transcript of an original letter, also preserved in the Evidence Chamber, which both proves the high value set on these adornments in the days of the Second Charles, and shows that in consequence of their expensive nature they were carried about from house to house by even the noble and wealthy families of the day :—

SIR—You will pardon this troble which is to acquaint you by my ladi’s order that my Lord having bought the House he lives in till the 25th of March with some furniture that must then be returned, which must agen be supplyed by you for theyr Grases use, the byeing or hiringe of tapestry hangings being expensive: my lady believes it much better to send for som of those hangings that lye by unused at Kilkenny and has ordered Hoskins to send 3 suits of tapestry hangings which are the whole suet of Decius, the suet of Akiles, the suet of hors hangings; also all the silver sconses, which ar all redy packt up and set up in the waiting room, if they are not well and secure for caridg Hoskins is desired to pack them beter, and to convey all that is sent for to Dublin, where Captain Backstar has orders to receav them, and send them to London. My lady desires you will take notis what is sent, that so there may be no mistake in the Inventory. By all this you will judg there are no resolutions of a sudden return, but tis but erly days for that; but tis thought if ther Grases stay but to the end of the somer tis worth the sending for the hangings.

Sir I should be very glad if during our stay hear I could be capable of any manner of servis for you, if so let me receav your comands which shall be most faithfully performed by her who is

Sr. your friend and servant

ELIZA LOWE.

My servis to Mrs. Smith and your son and daughter. I thank God my Lord and Lady and all their children hear are well. I beg you will convey this to Mrs. Blundle, for I know not where she is.

Address—“These for Mr. Valentine Smith at his House at Kilkenny.”

Endorsed—“My Lady Dutchess and Mrs. Lowe for things to be sent to England and answer, 28 Feb. 1682.”

Since the above lines were written, the following communication has been received from John Ward Dowsley, Esq., M.D., Clonmel, in answer to inquiry as to the fate of the ancient tapestry of Carrick Castle :—

Clonmel, 5th July, 1853.

MY DEAR SIR—I received yours of the 29th ult., and am sorry to say that I have not the tapestry you allude to. I think about twelve years since, I saw it in Carrick Castle. There were two large pieces, one was "Sampson killing the Lion," the subject of the other I do not now recollect. It was very much faded, as it was lying there I suppose for a couple of centuries, and going fast to decay. I got a friend of mine to enquire of Lord Ormonde's agent (I do not remember his name) if it would be sold : he would not sell it, and a short time after I heard it was sent to Kilkenny Castle.

I have four pieces of Tapestry—1st "Hercules and Omphale;" this is 10 feet by 12, colouring very brilliant. 2nd, "Rebecca at the Well," 9 feet by 18, rather faded. The two others are sporting subjects, very old and much faded. I had two other pieces, one a "Merry-making," after Teniers, 10 feet by 18, containing fifty-two figures, colours very good. The other, "Jupiter and Leda," 10 feet by 12 ; these I parted with to a gentleman in Carrick—Mr. Wogan.

I am, dear Sir, yours very truly,

Rev. James Graves.

JOHN W. DOWSLEY.

The second piece of tapestry which was originally at Carrick Castle, and the subject of which Dr. Dowsley was not able to remember, is probably Sampson pulling down the Philistine temple, already alluded to as being at present at Kilkenny Castle.

AN AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT

OF

THE DEATH OF WALLENSTEIN,

WITH A VINDICATION OF THE MOTIVES OF COLONEL WALTER BUTLER.

BY FRANCIS PRENDERGAST, ESQ., BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

THE death of Wallenstein, the principal figure in the Thirty Years' War, has always been enveloped in a mystery never entirely explained, even to the present day. Schiller's tragedy, his masterpiece, "The Death of Wallenstein," has given the subject a world-wide renown, and invested the character of the hero of the drama with a grandeur which has not only caused posterity to deal leniently with his errors or his crimes, but to pass even a harsher judgment than usual, on those who are supposed to have betrayed him to his death. Our object here, however, is to show that the most recent researches have placed the whole transaction in a very different light from that in which it has been hitherto viewed, and to prove that Butler, the author of Wallenstein's death, does not deserve the obloquy that has been heaped upon his name by the great poet and historian, as well as by writers of later date. Butler was one of the family of Paulstown, a cadet branch of the great house of Ormonde, and it ought not to be a matter of indifference to the county of Kilkenny, or, in-

for the Kilkenny Antislavery Society.

THE COURT YARD OF KILKENNY CASTLE,

FROM A DRAWING MADE FOR THE LATE WILLIAM ROBERTSON ESQ., ABOUT THE YEAR 1816.

Reproduced from Sketch by Mr Ward & Co. Belfast.

